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NOAA Gulf of Mexico News

CO-OPS to Launch Redesigned Web Site

The Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services (CO-OPS) has redesigned its Web site (<http://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov>) for easier navigation and data retrieval. On Monday, February 6, 2006, visitors to the new CO-OPS Web site will find more information about CO-OPS, in addition to enhanced search capabilities and a standardized layout. Since the new Web site has changed the format of the delivered data, CO-OPS plans to maintain the “old” Web site at <http://140.90.121.76> until April 1, 2006. For more information, contact [Darren Wright](#).

Teachers and Employees Alike Gain Knowledge in NOS’s Discovery Classroom

The NOS Communications and Education Division launched three new lesson plans this week on the “Classroom” section of the NOS Education Discovery Center Web site: (1) Ecological Forecasting/The Dead Zone, which describes ongoing research of the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, (2) Marine Navigation/Do You Need a Map? which focuses on the Office of Coast Survey’s nowCOAST data-retrieval tool; and (3) Aerial Photography and Shoreline Mapping/Images of Katrina, which discusses how aerial photography from the National Geodetic Survey can be used to assess damage from a natural disaster. The NOS Education Discovery Center is a collection of lesson plans developed in collaboration with NOS program offices. The 38 existing lesson plans cover 19 topical areas and emphasize hands-on activities using on-line data resources. The site was developed for teachers, but it’s also a great place for employees to learn more about NOS’s multifaceted activities. Visit the “Classroom” online at <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/education/classroom/welcome.html>. For more information, contact [Bruce Moravchik](#).

Hydrographic Services Review Panel Convenes in Texas

The Hydrographic Services Review Panel, a Federal Advisory Committee, was held in Houston, TX on January 25-26. The Panel discussed Federal efforts to re-open Gulf Coast ports and waterways in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, with particular emphasis on the role of NOAA’s Navigation Services Programs - the National Geodetic Survey, the Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services, the Office of Response and Restoration, and the Office of Coast Survey. The Panel discussed NOAA’s role in providing essential emergency navigation services, lessons learned following the 2005 response efforts, and NOAA’s role on the Committee of the Marine Transportation System. The meeting also included presentations on the importance of NOAA’s Navigation Services Programs from the U.S. Coast Guard, Army Corps of Engineers, and several other representatives from the marine transportation community. The Panel will provide NOAA with its recommendations on how to strengthen its navigation response capabilities in the next few months. More information is available at <http://nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/ocs/hsrp/hsrp.htm>. For more information, contact [Barbara Hess](#).

Gulf Coast Seeks Training to Help Communities Plan for Hazards

Trainers from the Gulf Coast Geospatial Center (GCGC) at the University of Southern Mississippi recently attended Hazard Mitigation Planning training at the Coastal Services Center. The training focused on how to conduct a community-level risk and vulnerability assessment and how to teach the training to local decision makers. GCGC was tasked by Hurricane Katrina-ravaged communities in coastal Mississippi to hold trainings on how to conduct mitigation planning as one aspect of community planning and redevelopment. For more information, contact [Tashya Allen](#).

Conference for Coastal Public Health Officials

A group of more than 80 state and local public health officials, research scientists, and ocean observation experts recently gathered at a workshop in St. Petersburg, Florida, to determine ways to protect public health using the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS). The group concluded that IOOS is essential for local coastal managers and public health officials to make more accurate decisions on beach and shellfish bed closures to reduce public health risks and maximize the economic value of these important resources. The conference was cosponsored by NOAA's Coastal Services Center and Office of Global Programs. For more information, contact [Mary Culver](#) or [Juli Trtanj](#).

OCRM Supports Louisiana Recovery Planning Day

OCRM staff participated in two Louisiana Recovery Planning Day forums, held simultaneously in over 30 locations within Louisiana and other states housing large numbers of people who have been displaced by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The purpose of the event was to gather public input on long-term priorities for rebuilding Louisiana. Josh Lott and John Kuriawa provided staff support to the forum in Atlanta, which was attended by over 100 Louisiana residents now living in the Atlanta area. Almost all the participants were from New Orleans. Kenneth Walker participated in the forum in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, where he has been working since Thanksgiving in support of the long-term recovery planning process there. Over 140 Parish residents attended the Plaquemines Parish meeting. All the input gathered at the forums will be included in the long-term community recovery plans being developed by the individual parishes and the state of Louisiana. For further information contact [Josh Lott](#).

NOS Center Provides Data to Aid Gulf Coast

The NOAA Coastal Services Center partnered with private industry to acquire high-resolution topographic elevation data for portions of the Gulf Coast region. The projects used both Light Detecting and Ranging (lidar) and Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar (IfSAR) technologies, and the data will assist in critical decision making in areas such as water quality, land use planning, storm surge, and emergency response. Satellite-based coastal land cover was also acquired for the region, with post-Katrina products planned for fiscal year 2006. The completed data sets are available at: <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/landcover/>. For more information, contact Steve.Raber@noaa.gov.

Settlement Reached for Equinox Oil Spill

On September 22, 1998, an estimated 500 to 1,500 barrels of crude oil were discharged into the environment near Lake Grande Ecaille in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, resulting in injuries to intermediate marsh, birds, and wildlife. Acting as natural resource trustees, NOAA, the Department of the Interior, and the State of Louisiana conducted a natural resource damage assessment and determined that a marsh creation/enhancement project could compensate for the suite of injuries resulting from the spill. The trustees prepared plans to address the restoration of natural resources and services injured by the responsible party and released a final Damage Assessment and Restoration Plan. The restoration project includes two components: a five-acre marsh creation and an eight-acre marsh enhancement using the "thin-layer" technique for dredged material disposal. On January 5, 2006, a settlement was signed that will pay for past assessment costs and restoration implementation. The trustees will use the bulk of settlement for salt marsh creation and enhancement in Barataria Bay (Plaquemines Parish). For more information, contact Tony.Penn@noaa.gov.

In the Gulf States:

Alabama

Critical Habitat Proposed for Alabama Beach Mouse

(Daphne, Ala.) – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published today a proposed rule to redesignate approximately 1,298 acres of critical habitat for the federally endangered Alabama beach mouse. The rule proposes a revision to critical habitat that was originally designated when the species was listed in 1985 and consisted mainly of primary and secondary dunes.

Areas proposed for critical habitat in this revision include: portions of the Fort Morgan State Historic Site and adjacent lands; lands along the right-of-way of Fort Morgan Parkway (State Highway 180); lands south of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management's (ADEM's) Coastal Construction Control Line (CCCL); high elevation habitat in the Gulf Highlands area (also known as the multifamily area); and portions of Gulf State Park. The proposed revision encompasses approximately 1,298 acres, including much of the original designation and higher elevation scrub habitat that we now know is important for the mouse during and after hurricane events. The Service is proposing to exclude the Perdue Unit of the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge, as well as 56 areas that are covered by incidental take permits under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) because of their existing conservation plans.

Public comments on the proposed rule will be accepted until April 3, 2006. Public hearings on this proposal will be held if requested, in writing, by March 20, 2006. (15 days before end of comment period) Written comments and information on the ABM proposal should be mailed, faxed, or delivered in person to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Attn: Acting Field Supervisor, 1208-B Main Street, Daphne, AL 36526; Fax: 251-441-6222; or sent by electronic mail to: robert_tawes@fws.gov.

A complete description of the proposed revision to critical habitat has been published in the Federal Register today. Copies of the proposal and maps are available on the Service Internet site at: <http://www.fws.gov/daphne>, or by contacting Rob Tawes, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1208-B Main Street, Daphne, AL 36526; phone: 251-441-5181. <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/news/2006/r06-009.html>

Florida

DEP's Project Greenshores Provides Hands-on Learning Experience

--Students include shoreline planting during study of historic Pensacola--

PENSACOLA - Project Greenshores, the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) \$2 million public-private partnership to restore marine habitat in Pensacola Bay, is the focal point of waterfront studies by local students in the Program for Academically Talented Students (PATs Center). PATs students from Brentwood Middle School in Pensacola are at Project GreenShores learning how the development of the historic waterfront on Pensacola Bay affects Florida's environment and how to restore the natural habitat of the area. This restoration project has reestablished an estuary habitat along the shoreline that was dredged during the early development of Pensacola. The three day study project entitled "Pensacola, Then and Now" will provide an opportunity for the students to plant emergent vegetation and upland grasses at Project GreenShores Site 1. These grasses and native vegetation stabilize the shoreline sand and provide habitat for wildlife.

"This project is yet another educational opportunity to emphasize the importance of our sensitive coastal marine resources," said DEP Northwest District Director Dick Fancher. "Project GreenShores allows students to see first-hand the importance of the shoreline while also making a significant contribution to the habitat restoration in Pensacola Bay."

Project GreenShores was launched in 2001 to restore 15 acres of salt marsh off the coast of Pensacola. More than 20,000 tons of recycled concrete and limestone rock form a man-made reef, safeguarding aquatic plants from wave damage and providing a foundation for seven acres of oyster habitat. The reef also provides a rest stop for migratory and local birds and shelters a diversity of marine life.

Project GreenShores is managed by DEP and supported by more than 60 local and national entities, including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, NOAA, the City of Pensacola and Escambia County. Volunteers have played an important role with more than 350 volunteers contributing more than 1,100 hours of work to the restoration. For more information, visit <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/northwest/Ecosys/section/greenshores.htm>.

\$1M in Grants to Help Farmers, Environment

Funds for high-tech irrigation systems offered

By Greg Martin <http://www.sun-herald.com/NewsArchive4/020206/tp5de5.htm?date=020206&story=tp5de5.htm>

More farmers in DeSoto and Charlotte counties will be able to install high-tech irrigation systems -- and help clean up several Peace River tributaries in the process, thanks to a \$1 million grant program. Already, several orange groves and farms in the Shell, Prairie and Joshua creek watersheds have tapped the grants to upgrade their irrigation systems. The rising cost of diesel fuel to run irrigation well pumps has provided an additional incentive for farmers to participate in the program. That creates a "win-win" situation, said David Brown, manager of the grant program for the [Southwest Florida Water Management District](#).

Called the Facilitating Agricultural Resource Management Systems, the program helps farmers reduce their withdrawals of deep well water and that reduces the leaching of poorer quality well water into the streams. Today in Sarasota, state Sen. Michael Bennett, R-Bradenton, and state Rep. [Nancy Detert](#), R-Sarasota, will present a check for \$1 million from the Legislature to the water district. The money is to

fund the program. Officials from both the district and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, which also contributes funding, will recognize some of the farmers who have already become partners in the program. The event is set for 4 p.m. at the district's Sarasota office, 6750 Fruitville Road.

The district has identified some priority areas for projects to be funded with grants from the program: The Upper Myakka River watershed and the Shell, Prairie and Joshua creek watersheds. In the Upper Myakka, excessive amounts of water draining from farms and other sources have caused tree die-offs in Flatford Swamp. In the Shell, Prairie and Joshua creek areas, agricultural pumping from wells has caused a decline in water quality due to mineralized well water leaching into the streams. The problem first surfaced during the drought of 1999-2001 after more groves began to sprout in rural watersheds. In both areas, projects are typically designed to reduce well pumping by storing stormwater and irrigation runoff, called "tail water." That water gets recirculated to the plants. Also, the funds could be used to shift from well water sources to surface water sources such as borrow pits.

In the Shell, Prairie and Joshua creek watersheds, located in DeSoto and Charlotte counties, some groves have already used the grants to implement a high-tech method using soil moisture meters and computers to adjust the amount of irrigation in "real time," Brown said. Those growers include TRB Groves in Charlotte County, which installed some 15 soil moisture meters at various soil depths across the 1,475-acre grove. The meters transmit information about the moisture content to a central computer. An operator can then tailor the amount of water pumped to certain areas by remote control. "By accurately and efficiently applying irrigation, that saves fuel, water and potentially saves fertilizer and manpower, so it's a big benefit," Brown said. "We preach from the district about saving water a lot. But when we talk about the ability to save fuel and manpower, that interests the growers, as well. "It's truly a win-win situation," he said.

Low-tech methods to better manage irrigation are also sponsored by the grant program. For example, Lady Moon Farms, an organic vegetable farm in Charlotte County, has used the funding to establish a system to capture stormwater runoff as well as irrigation tail water in an on-site reservoir. The reservoir is then used as a source of irrigation water. That project also received funding from the National Resource Conservation Service, which funds one-third of certain projects. Farms located within the priority areas qualify to receive up to 75 percent of the cost of the projects. Farms in other areas are also eligible for funding if the projects are deemed important, Brown said.

Louisiana

Calcasieu and Allen Parishes Move Forward With Recovery Meetings

Calcasieu Parish-- The Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Louisiana Recovery Authority, along with parish citizens, local businesses and organizations have written the draft plan for long-term community recovery in Calcasieu Parish. Input gathered during a series of ongoing public meetings, government workshops, and from Louisiana Recovery Planning Day was used in Calcasieu's draft plan. The Louisiana Recovery Planning Day, held on Jan. 21, 2006, was designed to reach out to displaced residents throughout the country. Long-Term Community Recovery Teams continue to work in 19 parishes affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Calcasieu Parish will conduct its second round of public meetings in Lake Charles and Sulphur later this week. The public will be presented with the preliminary impact assessment, along with the draft of their community's vision, guiding principles, needs and issues, and their goals and strategies for recovery. The public will be asked to prioritize these goals with the assistance of Agricultural Extension facilitators

from Louisiana State University. The goal of these meetings is to develop a final plan for Calcasieu Parish's long-term recovery. All citizens are encouraged to participate in the long-term recovery of their parish. The information gathered will be used by local officials and staff, and the Recovery Team for the development of parish-wide recovery projects. The meetings will take place:

- in Lake Charles 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Feb. 6, 2006, at the Lake Charles Civic Center, 900 Lakeshore Drive;
- in Sulphur 6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Feb. 7, 2006, at the Frasch Park Recreation Room, 400 Picard Road.

The Louisiana Recovery Authority is the planning and coordinating body that will assist in implementing the Governor's vision for the recovery of Louisiana. The authority will identify and prioritize the short- and long-term needs of the recovery. The authority will seek out and value local input as it plans and implements the recovery.

Allen Parish -- The Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Louisiana Recovery Authority (LRA), along with parish citizens, local businesses, and organizations are writing the draft plan for long-term community recovery in Allen Parish. Input gathered during a series of ongoing public meetings, government workshops, and Louisiana Recovery Planning Day on Jan. 21, is being used in Allen Parish's draft plan. Louisiana Recovery Planning day was designed to reach out to displaced residents throughout the country. Long-Term Community Recovery Teams continue to work in 19 parishes affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

"We've asked Louisianians to think big, which is what we are seeing in Allen Parish as they prepare their draft plan for long-term community recovery," said FEMA Director of Long-Term Community Recovery, Brad Gair. "By embedding long-term community recovery teams throughout the state, the residents are taking ownership in, and creating the vision for the recovery of their community."

Allen Parish will continue its series of public meetings concurrently in four locations on Feb. 7 and Feb. 9 from 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m., listed below.

Tuesday, Feb. 7 - Oakdale - Oakdale City Hall located at 333 E. 6 Ave.
Reeves - Reeves Town Hall located at 18370 Hwy 190 West

Thursday, Feb. 9 - Kinder - Kinder City Hall located at 333 N. 8
Elizabeth - Elizabeth City Hall located at 230 Poplar Street

Mississippi

Gulf's Health Only Fair to Poor: Alliance Working on Master Plan

By Mike Keller: mkeller@sunherald.com; <http://www.sunherald.com/mld/sunherald/news/local/13770781.htm>

BILOXI - Government officials laid out the beginnings of an ambitious plan to restore the Gulf Coast's natural resources and improve the Gulf of Mexico's health to an audience of about 100 in Biloxi on Wednesday. They also took recommendations from the audience for problems that need to be addressed by the five states, 13 federal agency partners and stakeholders that compose the Gulf of Mexico Alliance.

Several speakers said the project would work to make the Gulf better than it was before the 2005 hurricane season. "The goal is to restore natural lands to pre-Camille levels," said Bill Walker, the director of Mississippi's Department of Marine Resources, one of the agencies in the alliance. "If we only get back to pre-Katrina levels, then we will have failed." Walker said that on the state level, Gov. Haley Barbour is trying to get \$7.5 billion from Congress to fund a coastal restoration plan.

Speakers, who came from Mississippi and Alabama, mentioned several threats to the Gulf that demand the attention of the alliance, including an overabundance of nutrients from rivers draining into the Gulf and knocking natural balances out of whack, poor water quality and plant and animal habitat loss. "The biggest problem is population growth on the Coast," said George Crozier with the Dauphin Island Sea Lab, another alliance partner. "We need to balance growth with maintaining natural areas. We are in trouble in every aspect of the Gulf. Reports have said the Gulf is in fair condition. In reality, its state is fair to poor."

Gloria Car, with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Gulf of Mexico Program, said the Gulf's health affects national economics along with environmental issues. Amy King, with Alabama's Department of Conservation, was encouraged by the alliance meeting but said that conservationists need to work hard on educating the public. "If the general public and developers don't understand what you are doing, it won't work," King said. "Education is the thing that threads all of the important priorities together."

The results of the Biloxi alliance meeting will be presented during March's regional workshop in Corpus Christi, where all of the states, federal partners and stakeholders will get together to draft a master plan of action. "This is a huge opportunity that we need to work very hard to take advantage of," said Walker. "The alliance allows us to think on a broader scale. What can we do to make the Gulf of Mexico a better place?"

MDEQ to Receive Federal Money to Restore Water, Sewer Systems

Associated Press

BILOXI, Miss. - The Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality expects to receive between \$500 million and \$600 million in federal money to restore water and sewer systems damaged by Hurricane Katrina, officials say. The money will also be used to extend services north of the worst hurricane damage, where evacuees have resettled. The plan, which is still in its infancy, will be one of the first to incorporate recommendations from the Gov.'s Commission on Recovery, Rebuilding and Renewal.

The commission called for more regionalization of water and sewer system management, an area that has been the domain of local governments and businesses. "It may be the first step to regionalizing," said Charles Chisolm, MDEQ's executive director. "It certainly relates and comes directly from the vision established by the governor and the Gov.'s Commission."

Chisolm said the money, which will come from federal Community Development Block Grants, would be in addition to FEMA money going to rebuild and "storm-proof" existing water systems. The commission's final report recommended that the "Legislature should create a regional utility authority for the purpose of managing sewer, water, storm water and other utility services across the six coastal counties." Information from: The Sun Herald, <http://www.sunherald.com>. Read the full story at: <http://www.sunherald.com/mld/sunherald/news/state/13717493.htm>

Ocean Springs Board Adopts Flood Elevation Ordinance

By John Surratt <http://www.gulfive.com/news/mississippipress/index.ssf?/base/news/1138274191195410.xml>

OCEAN SPRINGS -- Ocean Springs aldermen Wednesday night approved a new city flood plain ordinance that requires new homes and businesses to be built one foot above the recent FEMA advisory flood elevations. The new ordinance is effective immediately and adopts the advisory flood elevations as the city's flood elevations.

City Community Development and Planning Director Donovan Scruggs said the advisory elevations were adopted because city building and planning officials were reluctant to delay action until Federal Emergency Management Agency set its elevations. Scruggs said he believed the advisory elevations would be adopted for the new FEMA flood insurance rate map. "We believe these elevations will become permanent by August," he said. Scruggs said city officials have developed a new flood elevation map for Ocean Springs, which is a combination of the current flood elevation maps and the new elevations. Adopting the new ordinance, Scruggs said, puts the city in compliance with the new FEMA flood insurance regulations and could reduce Ocean Springs' flood insurance rating from an 8 to a 6, resulting in a 10 percent reduction in flood insurance premiums.

Building official Paul Fox said the current map was used because it showed the boundaries between the different flood zones and applied the elevations from the FEMA advisory map.

"We also have the parcel numbers so I when I get an address, I can call up the parcel number and it gives me the size of the lot and the elevation so we can advise the property owner," he said.

Under the provisions of the ordinance, structures that were damaged by Hurricane Katrina and can be repaired will not be considered new construction and can be rebuilt at the pre-Katrina flood elevation in effect under the city's previous ordinance. "If a home was damaged during Katrina and can be repaired, it can stay and the elevation it was under the old flood ordinance," Fox said. "If the building was destroyed and the homeowner builds his house on the existing slab, that is considered new construction and they would have to elevate." Also, Fox said, if an existing house is repaired and is later destroyed, the homeowner would have to elevate when they rebuilt.

Besides the elevations, the ordinance will require buildings constructed in the A flood zones or in velocity zones -- areas subject to high velocity wave action -- will have to be built with break-away panels that can be pushed away by the rushing water to help protect the house. "What we're doing," Scruggs said, "is requiring people to build to a higher standard. We hope we can make Ocean Springs as flood-proof a community as possible."

Texas

Aquifers of the Gulf Coast of Texas Conference

By: Ruben Ochoa, Texas Water Development Board

Tectonic forces, sediment deposition, and oceanic meanderings over hundreds of millions of years shaped the geology that defines the natural water bearing and hydrodynamic characteristics of the gulf coast aquifers of Texas. These natural characteristics have been altered by human intervention, in some cases dramatically, in the relatively insignificant span of one to two hundred years. The economic and environmental viability of a large swath of Texas that includes the Houston-Galveston and Corpus Christi metropolitan areas may depend on how well these altered systems are managed into the future. On February 15, 16, and 17, 2006 the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) and Texas A&M University

at Corpus Christi will hold the Aquifers of the Gulf Coast of Texas Conference at the university's ocean-front campus location.

"The Gulf Coast aquifer is the primary source of groundwater for a very large area of Texas," says Dr. Robert Mace, director of the TWDB's Groundwater Resources Division. "This conference is designed to provide people in the area with an opportunity to better understand the area's aquifer systems and how they interact with their respective coastal ecosystems. This information may serve as a resource to help guide future decisions regarding the development of water for drinking and other purposes."

Groundwater monitoring workshops and groundwater conservation district consultations conducted by TWDB staff are on schedule for the first day of the conference. Dr. Mace will begin a full lineup of talks scheduled for the second day with an overview of the region's physiographic, climatic, and aquifer characteristics. Groundwater experts from academia, federal and state agencies, and several consulting firms will follow with talks covering topics that include the Yegua-Jackson and Brazos River alluvium aquifers, the region's hydrogeology, desalination, impacts of oil and gas operations, impacts of groundwater flows on estuaries, groundwater availability models, subsidence, conjunctive use, groundwater management, and the future of gulf coast aquifers as sources of water supply. A field trip on coastal geology is scheduled for the third and last day of the conference. The TWDB plans to publish a report based on papers submitted for the Corpus Christi conference.

The Gulf Coast conference is the third in a series of aquifer conferences that the TWDB plans to hold across the state. For more information on the conference, agenda, and registration, please visit: www.twdb.state.tx.us and click on the Aquifers of the Gulf Coast of Texas link located under the Hot Topics heading. You may also contact Sarah Davidson at sarah.davidson@twdb.state.tx.us.

Raise Your Water IQ with Texas' New Engaging Interactive Website Modules!

By: Stacy Pandey, Texas Water Development Board

Watch rivers flood, water infiltrating into an aquifer, people being affected by droughts and floods, and see the effects people have on water resources. Then test your knowledge with a vocabulary quiz! Learn how you can save water at home, and then be guided through a visualization of statewide water use volume, and how much water can be conserved if everyone followed those water conservation practices. Learn how different water user groups can conserve water, and try your luck at being a water planner and delivering the correct resources and tools to the right places at the right time. Good luck! Adults will have fun too!

TWDB collaborated with Hamline University's Center for Global Environmental Education to produce this series of interactive website modules, as well as a sixth grade curriculum, and a K-3 coloring book with original Texas-centric characters. You can access these exciting additions to TWDB's water education program on the new kids webpage at www.twdb.state.tx.us/kids. This website is designed to teach kids about surface water/groundwater, water use, conservation, water planning, the water cycle, and nonpoint source pollution. The modules support and enforce concepts in the newly developed sixth grade curriculum and in the TWDB's existing Major Rivers fourth and fifth grade curriculum.

The "Who Uses Water" activity series includes the "Webquest" activity. Here, students learn about the different water user groups. They select a water user group category and their team must determine how to ensure every group has enough water while meeting their conservation goal. This is a more in-depth look at the concepts presented in the water planner website module. The sixth grade curriculum is

correlated to Texas education standards (TEKS), and integrates multiple disciplines. Please forward the link to any teachers you know!

Other News

Alligator Snapping Turtles and Map Turtles Included on CITES Appendix III

February 3, 2006--Map and alligator snapping turtle vendors will be subject to new export regulations beginning June 14. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is including these species in Appendix III of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife and Flora (CITES). This will be the first Appendix III listing for the United States.

CITES is an international agreement between governments that ensures the survival of a species is not threatened by trade. Species included in CITES are listed in three appendices by the protection level needed. Appendix III species being shipped are required to have an export permit from their native country. Additionally, the certificate requires that every specimen be listed at the species level, halting the practice of combining different map turtle species into one category. For further information on the CITES listing refer to:

<http://www.fws.gov/policy/library/05-24099.html>.

The alligator snapping turtle is the largest freshwater turtle in North America. They are protected by all states, but levels of protection vary. Louisiana law bans commercial trade of alligator snapping turtles. Louisiana law also places a one-a-day per boat limit on alligator snapping turtles taken by recreational fishermen. Alligator snapping turtles are declining substantially throughout their range. A major threat is over-collection of turtles from the wild for human consumption or the pet trade.

There are 12 species of map turtles in North America. Several occur in Louisiana such as the Alabama map turtle, the Pascagoula map turtle and the false map turtle. Trade in map turtles has increased rapidly since the 1990s. The demand for the turtles comes from the international pet industry. Typically, map turtles are raised on farms in the United States, but map turtles collected from the wild also find their way into commercial trade.

Report Released on the Need for Sustainable Coastal Landscapes for Help Protect Against Natural Disasters

A working group of 19 natural and social scientists and engineers exchanged perspectives on how coastal ecosystem restoration could be more effectively integrated with planning for improved hurricane protection and future navigational infrastructure. Based on these deliberations, the group has prepared a report intended to inform the policies and actions for recovery of regions of Louisiana affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The report, *A New Framework for Planning the Future of Coastal Louisiana after the Hurricanes of 2005*, concluded that in the long term, hurricane protection for larger population centers, including the New Orleans region, can only be secured with a combination of levees and a sustainable coastal landscape. They also noted that sustainable coastal landscapes should include extensive marshes and swamps and the bayous, coastal barriers and ridges that characterize the Mississippi deltaic plain and the Chenier plain in the southwest. If natural processes are not interrupted,

coastal wetlands are able to sustain themselves over hundreds of years even where the land is subsiding or the sea level is rising. The working group report is available online [at www.umces.edu/la-restore](http://www.umces.edu/la-restore).

Energy

Louisiana Governor Seeks More Royalties, Threatens to Block Offshore Leases

February 02, 2006 — By Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. — Gov. Kathleen Blanco is demanding that the federal government give Louisiana more of the billions in royalties from oil and natural gas extracted off its coastlines, saying she'll block future leases without an increase in the state's share. Blanco's warning, in a letter this week to the federal agency that manages offshore drilling, comes as the state is struggling to finance up to \$40 billion in hurricane recovery and protection projects, and complaining that the federal government isn't helping enough.

The state wants half the royalties from oil and gas produced beyond its three-mile boundary -- a sum that could amount to more than \$2 billion a year. The state currently gets 27 percent of royalties produced between three miles and six miles offshore. For oil and gas production in the Gulf of Mexico from six miles offshore to international waters, Louisiana received just \$32 million of the \$5.7 billion the federal government brought in. Under federal law, for lease sales to go through, governors in adjacent states must agree that the sales are consistent with their states' coastal management plans.

The U.S. secretary of the interior, who oversees the Minerals Management Service, could override Blanco if she attempts to block the next lease sale. But Sidney Coffee, Blanco's executive assistant for coastal activities, said the federal government probably will want to avoid the yearslong legal battle that could result. The Minerals Management Service has not completed its review of Blanco's letter and has not issued a response, an agency spokesman said Wednesday.

The governor met with oil and gas industry officials last week. Jeff Copeskey, of Louisiana Mid-Continent Oil and Gas Association, said Blanco's letter is meant to bring attention to the issue, and is not a slap at the industry.

Florida Senators Launch "Preemptive Strike" Against Off-Shore Drilling

Florida's two senators Bill Nelson (D) and Mel Martinez (R) introduced a bill on February 1, 2006 that was designed to be a "preemptive" strike against efforts to open more of the eastern Gulf of Mexico near Florida's coastline to oil and gas development. The bill (S. 2239) would establish a permanent no-drilling zone extending at least 260 miles off the Florida coastline in much of the eastern Gulf of Mexico. The bill would remove existing leases close to Florida's coastline by granting royalty "forgiveness" on active leases in the western and central Gulf. The Florida senators decided to introduce the bill when the Department of Interior published a plan in January to shift state seaward boundaries and place much of the Lease Sale 181 area under the control of Louisiana. To view the bill visit, Thomas at <http://thomas.loc.gov/> and search for S. 2239.

MMS Incentives for Some Gulf Fields Off Since Storm

Angel Gonzalez FWN Financial News 1/31/2006; http://www.rigzone.com/news/article.asp?a_id=29021

Seeking to reduce the recent hurricanes' permanent impact on Gulf of Mexico oil and gas production, the U.S. Minerals Management Service plans to offer financial incentives for projects that would otherwise be unprofitable. Analysts and officials have estimated that between 1% and 2% of the Gulf's oil and gas production capacity may have been lost for good due to hurricanes Rita and Katrina. The storms destroyed dozens of mostly-older platforms with reservoirs too small to justify reinvestment.

The MMS will suspend royalties "when it is determined that royalty relief is needed for production to resume," the agency said in a notice last week. Applications will be accepted starting Feb. 1. During a conference call with analysts last week, Chevron Corp. (CVX) estimated its permanent loss of Gulf production to range between 10,000 and 20,000 barrels a day.

Chevron lost several small platforms, as well as a large deepwater facility, the tension leg platform Typhoon, which had a capacity of 40,000 barrels a day and 60 million cubic feet of gas a day. A Chevron executive said in October that the company would seek to restore production from the Typhoon field. The hurricanes destroyed 115 platforms and damaged 52 others, out of a total of 4,000, the MMS said in a recent report. About 183 pipelines were damaged as well, the agency said.

Approximately 373,407 barrels of oil a day, or 24.9% of daily oil production, and 1.66 billion cubic feet per day of natural gas production, or 16.6% of daily output, remained off-line as of Jan. 25, the MMS said.

Training and Conferences

Managing the Impacts of Residential Docks and Piers in Mississippi & Alabama

Wednesday **February 15th**, 2006 between 8:30 AM – 4:30 PM at the Gautier Convention Center
2012 Library Lane Gautier, MS 39553

Presented by: Mississippi Department of Marine Resources' Grand Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve Coastal Training Program; the Coastal Training Program at Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve; the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, State Lands Division, Coastal Section; and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management

This one-day workshop is designed to provide coastal decision makers with information, skills, and tools to evaluate and manage the environmental, visual, navigational, and public access impacts associated with the construction and maintenance of residential docks and piers.

Who Should Attend: Municipal Officials, Coastal and Land Use Planning and Zoning Board Members, Building Permit Staff, Federal and State Agency Regulatory Staff, Consultants, Coastal Engineering Firms, and Tax Assessors.

Agenda Highlights:

- Overview of the science related to managing impacts
- Environmental impacts
- Managing visual impacts
- Navigation and public access issues
- Best management practices and regulations
- Resources and technical assistance options

The Coastal Training Program at the Weeks Bay Reserve, in Fairhope, AL is providing a motor coach for Alabama participants to travel to the workshop. The workshop, shuttle, and lunch are provided at no charge. Space is limited. To register for the event, please fax the completed registration form to (251) 928-1792, Attn: Cheryl McClary. Need more information? Contact Cheryl by phone at: (251) 928-9792 or by email: Cheryl.McClary@dcnr.alabama.gov. Registration is due by Friday February 10, 2006.

14th International Conference on Aquatic Invasive Species

May 14-19, 2006

The introduction and spread of non-native species in freshwater and marine environments is a worldwide problem that is increasing in frequency. There are numerous alien invertebrate, fish and plant species that are being introduced through various pathways, and are causing significant damage to coastal and freshwater ecosystems, and to the economies that depend upon them.

The International Conference on Aquatic Invasive Species is widely considered the most comprehensive international forum for the review of accumulated scientific knowledge, presentation of the latest field and laboratory research, introduction of new technological developments for species control and mitigation, discussion of policy and legislation to prevent new introductions, ballast water and other shipping-related issues, and public education and outreach initiatives to raise awareness about aquatic invasive species.

Location: Sonesta Beach Resort, Key Biscayne, Florida, USA

Contact Information: Elizabeth Muckle-Jeffs, Conference Administrator, 1-800-868-8776; E-mail: profedge@renc.igs.net.

Home Page URL: <http://www.icaais.org/index.html>

The National Main Streets Conference

June 4-6, 2006 New Orleans

The National Main Streets Conference is the premier conference for commercial district revitalization. Small and rural towns, suburban-ring communities, large and mid-sized cities, and urban neighborhood business districts can all benefit from the ideas, solutions, issues, and networking opportunities this conference offers. [Learn More](#)

Although it was a little bumpy there for awhile, the National Trust Main Street Center, along with our partner, Louisiana Main Streets, has resumed planning for the 2006 National Main Streets Conference in New Orleans. Originally scheduled for April 2006, the conference was to take place in a downtown hotel that has since been occupied by FEMA. Even though the recovery effort will be well under way by the spring, we were unable to secure facilities for that time frame.

Having chosen to keep the conference in New Orleans in the wake of the Katrina disaster, we know that the passion and commitment of our national Main Street network – to take a stand for the preservation of each community's character – will make this one of the largest and most meaningful gatherings in the 25-year history of the movement. At the same time, we are committed to bringing the full resources of the National Trust for Historic Preservation to focus on broad community revitalization efforts in New Orleans as well. The 2006 National Main Streets Conference will offer an opportunity to show the nation how and why preservation-based revitalization is the best solution to rebuilding the Gulf Coast Region after the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

[Learn about all the Trust Relief Efforts in the Gulf Coast Region](#)
[Find hurricane recovery resources from the National Trust Main Street Center](#)

Did you find this edition useful? Please send suggestions, comments, and new items for publication to Laurie.Rounds@noaa.gov